

# How to Interpret your Department's Workforce Data...

*OR*

*What does this mean???*

Upon first review of this data it may confirm what you already knew about your department - that the staff are evenly distributed across all age groups; that the staff is made up of mostly younger individuals with more senior-level staff (usually managers and executives) age 40 and older; or, that the staff is mostly over the age of 40. Whichever the case, the raw data provides a starting point for analysis of your organization's workforce and staffing activities. Many factors currently affect the recruiting, selection and hiring, and retention of your staff, but in the next few years, the changing demographics outside of your control will impact your organization profoundly. Such elements as the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, the comparatively smaller number of Gen-Xers available to replace those fully or semi-retired Boomers, and the loss of key leadership staff, all represent the challenge of future staffing. The question of how well the State will be able to retain employees with the most critical skills and competencies needed to continue service delivery is another challenge of future staffing.

There are generally three approaches to workforce planning. Any one or combination of these three models could be used within the context of your department and workforce environment to develop your departmental workforce plan. The three approaches are:

**Workforce approach:** examines the current workforce and occupations and projects the number and characteristics of jobs and the number of employees needed to fill them at a specific point in the future.

**Workload approach:** focuses on the amount and type of work the organization anticipates handling at a specific point in time in the future, and uses this information to project the number of resources (people and skills) needed to perform that work.

**Competency approach:** identifies sets of competencies aligned with the organization's mission, vision, and strategic goals. This approach assumes the organization has already considered workforce and workload and can focus not only on the number of people, but the competencies employees must master for organizational success.

The questions on the following page serve as a starting point from which to begin your workforce planning efforts. However, not all of these questions may need to be addressed. The relevant questions will become evident after you determine the workforce planning approach that will best meet your department's workforce planning needs.

## Questions to ask when interpreting workforce data:

- Where is your organization/department going in terms of technology, programs, products, services, and finances?
- Are there any major projects or projected growth/demand in the products/services provided by your department?
- What are the critical competencies or skill sets required of staff in your organization/department currently? What critical competencies or skill sets are envisioned as being required of departmental staff in the future?
- What “jobs” do you have within your organization/department? (*Not just job classifications, but functions and workload requirements.*)
- How long does it take for replacement employees to reach full functionality in the same job?
- What feeder classifications exist and are used in your department? Are there enough employees currently in feeder classes, and are those employees prepared for promotion when needed?
- Have training and development gaps in existing staff been identified and addressed?
- What recruitment activities does your department engage in to market your department to the private sector and other public sector organizations? How does your department traditionally attract and recruit qualified and interested applicants?
- What types of recruitment and hiring approaches does your department currently use? Has your department tried or contemplated trying other, non-traditional types of recruitment and/or hiring approaches to better meet staffing needs?
- How is work performance currently evaluated in your department? How is workload currently determined and allocated in your department?
- What plans have been made to address HR staffing needs and issues?
- Do you know where “high performance” employees in your organization/department have typically been hired from or how these individuals have been hired into your organization/department?
- What is your department’s turnover rate, and what are the typical reasons for employees leaving your organization?
- Does your department have planned attrition? And why?
- Does your department anticipate any workload, staffing, and/or organizational changes in the short-term or long-term? If so, what are the anticipated changes and why, and what has the organization done thus far in preparation?